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DIVISION 7

TRAINING AND SAFETY

NEWSLETTER

September 2021

The losses that the New York City Fire Department sustained on September 11th 2001 cannot be calculated. We can add up the years of service that each member had on the day of the terrorist attacks and we can come up with a number. However, that number would not reflect on the quality of people that were responding to calls for help at the World Trade Center. There were leaders in that number of 343 and there were future leaders that had not been developed yet. There were young firefighters and veteran firefighters. These men had their whole lives in front of them. They were incredibly brave men that charged up the stairways of the North Tower, the South Tower, and the Marriot Hotel to save lives. After the second plane crashed into the South Tower, the members on the scene thought we were going to be hit again. Everyone who responded to the World Trade Center was terrified. They went to work anyway and charged up the stairways. In keeping with the highest traditions of the FDNY, they saved many lives at extreme personal risk. This was the biggest rescue effort in the history of the United States. However, most people who participated in it were killed.

Every September issue of the Division 7 Training and Safety Newsletter highlights one of the 343 members who were murdered in the line-of-duty at the World Trade Center. Last year, we highlighted Chief of Department Peter Ganci. September issues before that honored Captain Paddy Brown, Captain William Burke, Captain William McGinn, Deputy Chief Orio Palmer, and Firefighter Andrew Fredericks. This year, on this landmark occasion, Deputy Chief Raymond Downey will be honored and remembered.



Ray Downey was born on September 19, 1937. He grew up in Woodside, Queens. While attending Saint Teresa's Elementary School, he was friends with another future stalwart of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), Vincent Dunn.

Upon graduation from high school, Ray Downey enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. Ray was a Corporal in the 2nd Battalion, 10th Marines. He served his country in the Marines from 1956 to 1959.

Upon his discharge from the Marine Corps., Ray did several jobs. He did construction, he worked on roads, and he worked in a bank. It is while he was working in the bank that he met his future wife, Rosalie. They would be married in April of 1960. They would have five children, Raymond Jr., Joseph, Charles, Marie and Kathy.



Ray took the test to become an FDNY Fireman. He had two brothers that took the test also, Gene and Tom. Ray was appointed on April 7, 1962. His two brothers also were hired. His brother Gene retired from Engine 93 and his brother Tom retired as the Captain of Engine 263.



Upon graduation from Proby School, Ray was assigned to Ladder 35 on the West side of Manhattan. He was beginning to learn his craft. Three years after being assigned to Ladder 35, Ray was asked to be a Battalion Aide in the busy 9th Battalion. Battalion 9 shared the same firehouse with Ladder 4. While assigned there, he worked with Captain John O'Rourke of Ladder 4 (future Chief of Department). Captain O'Rourke saw something in Ray Downey and he recruited him to transfer to Ladder Co. 4 on October 29, 1966.

In the mid-1960s, the "war years" had started. Fireman Ray Downey was going to more than his share of fires in Midtown and the West side of Manhattan in Ladder 4. He loved the job and he wanted to learn more. He began to think about transferring to a Rescue Company. He decided to transfer to Brooklyn's Rescue 2. His transfer came through on June 28, 1969.



While in Rescue 2, there was much to learn about being in a professional Rescue company. His duties now included building collapse, refrigeration leaks, hazardous materials, subway emergencies, ship-board fires and emergencies, water rescues, car accidents, trench collapses, confined space rescues, in addition to the heavy volume of fire duty.



Ray Downey learned from the extremely knowledgeable and experienced men of Rescue 2.

Ray Downey started studying for Lieutenant. He took the Lieutenant's test and he did well. He was promoted to Lieutenant on April 17, 1972. He was assigned to Battalion 11 as a Covering Lieutenant. Ray wouldn't be covering very long. He put his transfer paper in and got assigned to Engine 58 on September 30, 1972.



Engine 58, Ladder 26, and Ladder 26-2 were doing a tremendous amount of fire duty in the 1970s. Their activity level earned them the nickname "The Fire Factory". The fire officers that were assigned to that firehouse read like an all-star team. Vincent Dunn was the Captain of Engine 58 (the author of numerous articles and books on firefighting and collapse), John O'Reagan was the Captain of Ladder 26 (the author of Ladders 3), Bill Ryan was a Lieutenant in Ladder 26 (a future Captain of Rescue 3), Ray Downey was a Lieutenant in Engine 58 (a future Captain of Rescue 2), Joe Sassone was a Lieutenant in Ladder 26-2 (a future Captain of Rescue 4), and Ray Brown was a Lieutenant in Ladder 26-2 (The future first Chief of Rescue Operations.) It was a fertile environment for a young officer to develop.



As a young Lieutenant, Ray Downey was learning about collapse operations. He studied the documents that were published by the London Fire Brigade after World War II. He was a sponge for information. His efforts

would eventually make him a world-wide expert on collapse rescue.

Five years after being promoted to Lieutenant, Ray Downey would be promoted to Captain. He was promoted on July 9, 1977 and was assigned to the 11th Division. Soon after being promoted, the fire department was establishing a new Squad 1 in Brooklyn. Captain Ray Downey was hand selected to become the first Captain of Squad 1 on December 3, 1977.



In 1980, the Captain's spot in Rescue 2 became vacant. Captain Downey was asked to become the new Captain of Rescue 2. He was assigned there on June 28, 1980.

While Captain Downey was assigned to Rescue 2, he was involved in many rescues. He was awarded two Class III's (an act of unusual personal risk), two Class "B's" (an act of personal bravery or initiative and capability), and eight Unit Citations (an outstanding company operation based on teamwork and

cooperation.) Two of Captain Ray Downey's rescues are chronicled here:





77 Clermont Avenue, Brooklyn

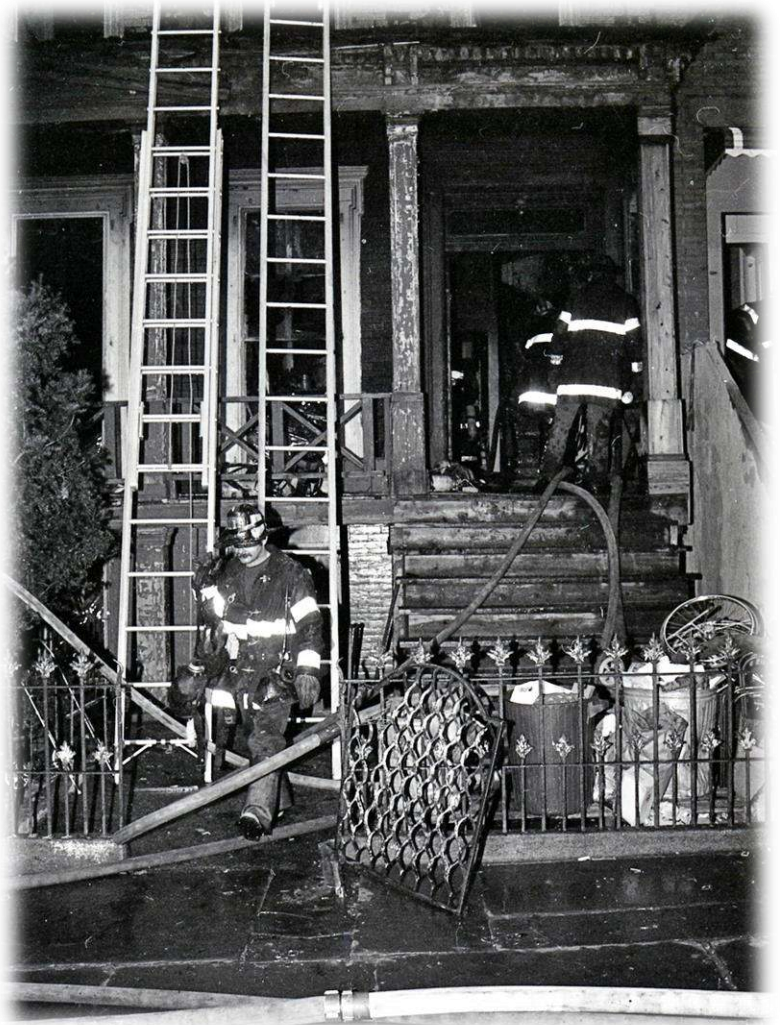
On April 14, 1985, Captain Ray Downey came into the firehouse early. He was performing some administrative duties in the office at 1714 hours. The on-duty members of Rescue 2 were out on a run when the department radio crackled a reported

phone alarm three blocks from the firehouse. Box 385 was transmitted. Captain Downey looked out the firehouse window and he could see the telltale plume of smoke indicating a working fire. He and two other off-duty firefighters took one of their private cars to the scene of the fire. When they arrived, the only FDNY unit on the scene was Engine 210. They were stretching a hose line. The fire was in a three-story 20' x 40' wood frame building. People in the street were shouting that "Baby Michael" was trapped in the fire building. Captain Downey made his way to the second floor where he was enveloped in choking smoke. Captain Downey had no self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). The fire now involved 60% of the floor. Time was running out. Captain Downey pushed forward through the punishing smoke and heat and made it to the rear bedroom. He reached up

on the bed. He found the trapped occupant. "Baby Michael" was actually a 29-year-old invalid. He was unconscious. Captain Downey marshalled all his strength and determination and dragged "Baby Michael" off the fire floor and out of danger.



Captain Raymond Downey was awarded the "Susan Wagner Medal" on Medal Day 1986 and a Class III for his heroic rescue.





460 Hart Street, Brooklyn

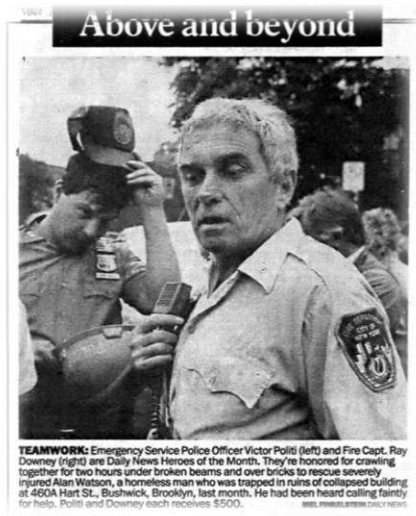


On August 27, 1987 at 0917 hours, Rescue 2 was dispatched to a reported building collapse at 460 Hart Street. Upon arrival, the rubble of a collapsed building is all that was left of a once proud four-story wood frame building. There was a trapped person in the rubble. Captain Downey and Firefighter (Fr.) Lawrence Gray found an opening in the rubble where they could hear the cries of the trapped occupant. Captain Downey tunneled into the rubble, following the cries for help. He crawled until he was near the far wall and he saw the clothing of



the trapped person. His name was Alvin Watson, age 35. Captain Downey ordered Fr. Gray to clear the debris above them as he applied the resuscitator. Air bags were used to raise the large beam that was pinning Mr. Watson. Mr. Watson's ankle was also pinned. A port-a-power and small air bags were used to free his ankle. Mr. Watson was placed on a backboard and put into a Stokes Basket Stretcher and was removed from the rubble.

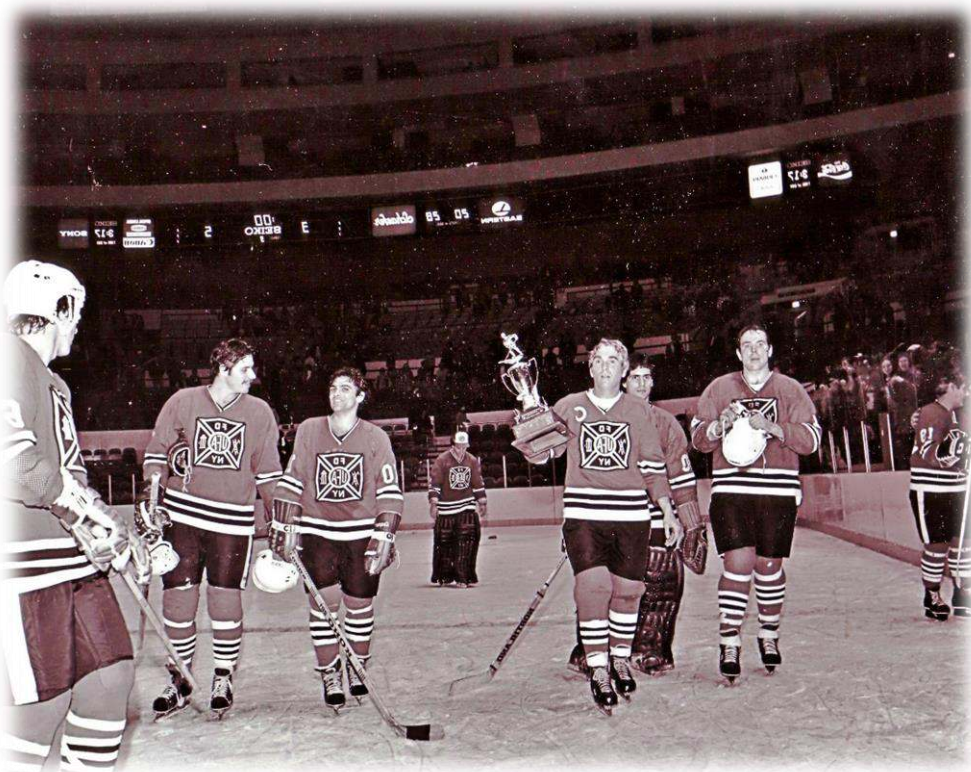
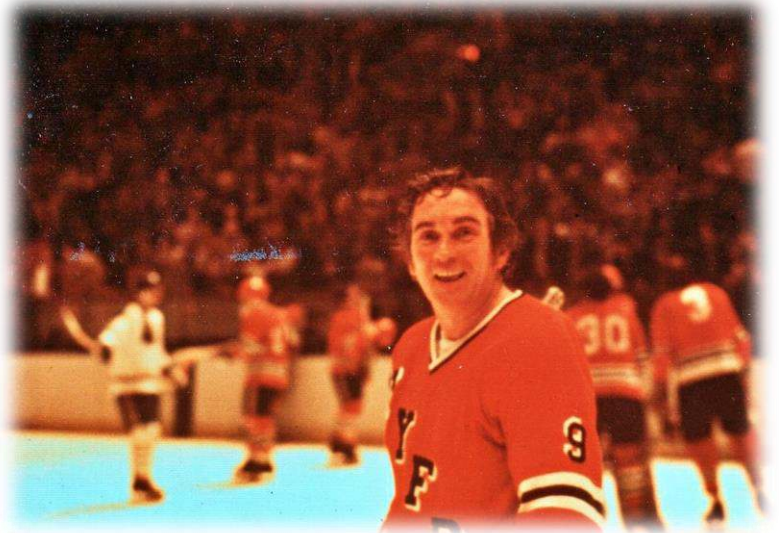
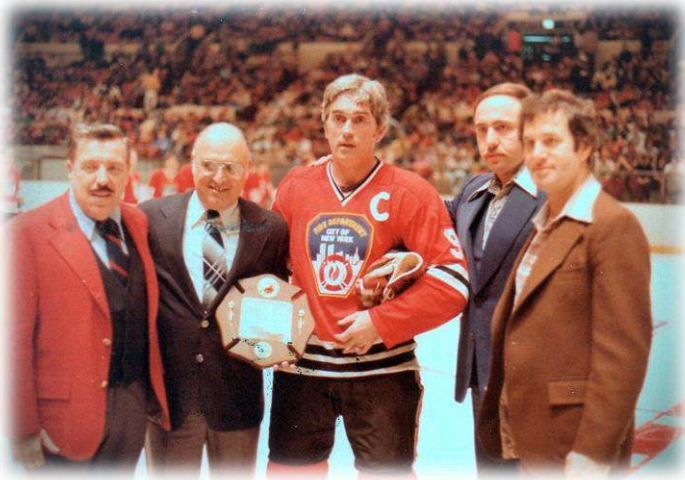
Captain Raymond Downey was awarded a Class III and the Thomas F. Dougherty Medal on Medal Day 1988 for his heroic rescue. In addition, Captain Downey was awarded the Daily News Hero of the Month Award for this rescue. It was the second time he won this honor. The first time was in 1968.







Ray Downey was always a fitness minded firefighter. He was a runner. And, he developed a love for ice hockey. He never played ice hockey before coming onto the FDNY. The closest he came to it was playing roller hockey. Ray Downey enrolled in the Fire Science Program at Suffolk County Community College and he played hockey on the college team. Ray started playing hockey on the FDNY Hockey Team. He was a good player. So good, he was named the team Captain. Ray Downey's FDNY #9 hockey jersey has been retired.



Ray Downey's life has been a story of leading and supporting those around him. This can be exemplified by looking at his children. They have all become highly accomplished athletes in high school and college. Ray has been honored by institutions that he supported. If you go to a Stony Brook University Football game today, you will see the "Ray Downey Booster Club Tent". There is a football game named after him, the "Ray Downey Heroes Football Classic". If you go to the Hofstra University wrestling room, you will see that it is named after Ray Downey.



Ray Downey had the foresight to see the need for Urban Search and Rescue Teams (USAR). Ray was at the center of establishing and training the USAR teams. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) adopted the USAR system developed by Ray. There are now twenty-eight USAR teams nationwide.

Once the USAR Teams were up and running, Ray was the logical choice to be the Task Force Leader of New York's team. They had numerous deployments, including responding to hurricanes Hugo, Andres, Fran, Marilyn, and Opal. Ray responded to the Olympic Bombing in Atlanta. He was also the Rescue Operations Officer after the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993.



MEMBERS of New York City Search and Rescue team check out equipment before boarding military aircraft for trip to Oklahoma City.

In addition to the above, Ray was the USAR Chief of Operations at the terrorist bombing of the Murrah Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City in April 19, of 1995. He arrived with the New York USAR team on April 19th, 12 hours after the attack. He provided his expertise and his leadership. He was a steady hand at this enormous tragedy. The Governor of Oklahoma, Frank Keating, visited the site of the bombing and befriended Ray Downey. He gave Ray a rosary to protect him and his men. The New York USAR team was deployed for 16 days and nights. One hundred sixty-eight people were killed in the terrorist attack at the Murrah Federal Office Building. Governor Keating penned an article in tribute to Ray Downey after September 11th. The article is titled "Oklahoma loses a true friend."

In 1988, the FDNY started the "Rescue Liaison Unit". It was staffed with senior Rescue Company Officers. This concept would eventually become the Rescue Battalion. On the day tour of October 24, 1988, there was a collapse of a 6-story loft building on 31st Street in Manhattan. It was a catastrophic collapse of a bearing wall.

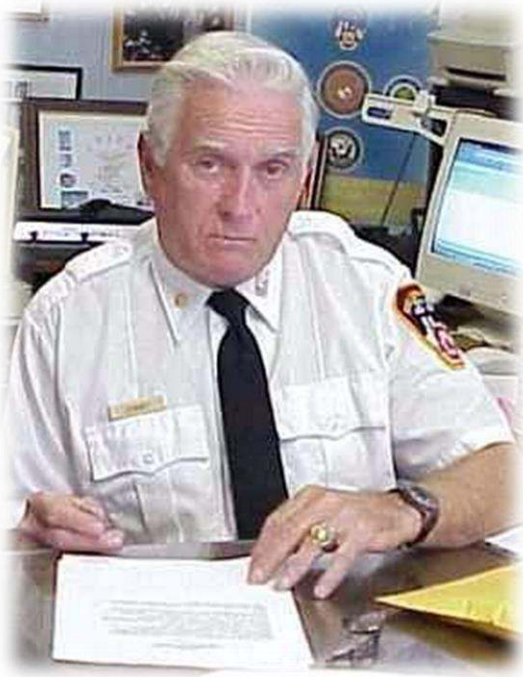
Eventually, Deputy Chief Vincent Dunn became the Incident Commander. He put Captain Downey in charge of Rescue Operations as he was assigned to the Rescue

Liaison Unit that day. Through his leadership, he was able to keep the operations moving in a positive direction. Rescues were made at that operation as a result.





Ray Downey was involved in many projects. He was a driving force in working on FDNY's Collapse Rescue Bulletin along with D.C. Vincent Dunn, D.C. Tom Kennedy, and Captain John Norman. He was involved in developing the Bunker Gear. He was also involved in developing the Quartermaster program. Ray also came up with the idea of the "Family Transport Vans" when one of his lieutenants, John Vigiano, came down with cancer. He was awarded an "Administrative Medal" in 1995 for his efforts.



Ray Downey was promoted to Battalion Chief on August 13, 1994. He was eventually placed in command of the newly formed Special Operations Command (SOC). Ray Downey got the newly formed command working as a well-oiled machine.

Battalion Chief Ray Downey was working on September 11, 2001. He reported into Chief of Department Pete Ganci. He was offering his expertise wherever he could. Chief Downey had a good situational awareness that day. He anticipated a collapse of the buildings. It is reported that he got on the Manhattan department radio and made a transmission stating that we are under attack and to send the Army. A long-time friend Acting Battalion Chief Al Fuentes was standing near Chief Downey when he saw that people were trapped in the remains of the Marriot Hotel. He saw six people along with Battalion Chief Larry Stack. Chief Downey was helping another person when he turned and looked at Acting Battalion Chief Fuentes. Just then, the collapse of the North Tower started. Ray Downey was killed in the collapse of the North Tower.

It would take eight months to find and identify Ray Downey via DNA. He was laid to rest on May 20, 2002. Ray Downey was 63 years old. He had 39 years on the FDNY. Ray Downey was promoted to Deputy Chief posthumously on September 10, 2001. He left behind his wife Rosalie, and his children, Ray, Joseph, Charles, Marie, and Kathy. May he rest in peace. Never forget!



Deputy Chief Jay Jonas, Division 7

Last Alarm Box 5-5-8087



RESOURCES: NY Daily News, NY Newsday, The Daily Oklahoman, FDNY Medal Day Books from 1986 and 1988, Congressional Record, U.S. Senate, January 23, 2002, FDNY Hockey Team Website, New York Times.

THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ESSAY:

Deputy Chief Vincent Dunn (Ret.), Battalion Chief Joseph Downey (SOC), Deputy Chief Charles Downey (Div. 15), Battalion Chief Jack Kleehaas (Ret.), Battalion Chief Al Fuentes (Ret.), Deputy Chief Mark Ferran (Div. 14), Fr. Paul Stallone (Squad 1), Lieutenant Daniel Murphy (Ret.), Deputy Assistant Chief John Norman (Ret.), Captain Joe Sassone (Ret.), Battalion Chief William Moore (Ret.), Assistant Chief Michael Gala, Fr. Lee Ielpi (Ret.), Lieutenant Chris Roberto (Division 3), Randy Barron (FDNY Photo Unit).

IN MEMORIAM:



FIREFIGHTER WAYNE T. GOEHRING, ENGINE 311 (RET.) Passed away on July 19, 2021 from injuries sustained while operating at Manhattan Box 5-5-8087. This was the rescue and recovery operation following the attacks on September 11, 2001. May he rest in peace. Never forget!



PARAMEDIC STEPHENSON MCCOY, STATION 22 (RET.) Passed away on August 6, 2021 from injuries sustained while operating at Manhattan Box 5-5-8087. This was the rescue and recovery operation following the attacks on September 11, 2001. May he rest in peace. Never forget!



LIEUTENANT PATRICK J. WHALEN, LADDER 83 (RET.) Passed away on August 22, 2021 from injuries sustained while operating at Manhattan Box 5-5-8087. This was the rescue and recovery operation following the attacks on September 11, 2001. May he rest in peace. Never forget!